

Message Text

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SUBJECT: VIEWS OF CHAU SAU, LEADER OF OPPOSITION DEMOCRATIC PARTY

1. ON MARCH 25 CHAU SAU, HEAD OF THE OPPOSITION DEMOCRATIC PARTY AND AN OUTSPOKEN CRITIC OF MARSHAL LON NOL, CALLED ON ME AT HIS REQUEST. CHAU SAU, PROFESSOR AT THE PHNOM PENH LAW SCHOOL, APPEARS TO BE MORE OF A DREAMER THAN A PRACTICAL POLITICIAN. HIS PRIMARY CLAIM TO RECOGNITION IS HIS LONG-STANDING AND OPEN OPPOSITION TO THE SOCIO-REPUBLICANS AND PARTICULARLY PRESIDENT LON NOL. HE HAS BEEN CLOSE TO THE JAPANESE EMBASSY AND VISITED TOKYO RECENTLY. HIS POLITICAL VIEWS PARALLEL THE NEUTRALIST POLITICS ADVOCATED BY SON SANN..

2. CHAU SAU CLEARLY WAS ON A FISHING EXPEDITION TO OBTAIN MY VIEWS ON THE DEPARTURE OF THE MARSHAL. I REPEATED TO HIM WHAT I HAVE TOLD ALL THE OTHER KHmers AND DIPLOMATS IN TOWN, WHICH MY NOW HAS BECOME ALITANY: OUR ROLE IS NOT TO UNDERMINE THE EXISTING INSTITUTIONS, THAT THE QUESTION OF LEADERSHIP OF THE GKR IS SOMETHING FOR THE KHmers TO DECIDE BY THEMSELVES, THAT TOWARDS THIS END THEY SHOULD CONSULT EACH OTHER, AND THAT AS FAR AS THE US IS CONCERNED THE PERSONALTIES INVOLVED WOULD NOT IN AND OF THEMSELVES CONSTITUTE ANY OBSTACLES TO A SETTLEMENT. CHAU SAU ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE CATALYTIC FORCE BEHIND THE MOVE TO MAKE THE MARSHAL DEPART CAMBODIA HAS BEEN THE ASIAN COUNTRIES, BUT THAT THEY MERELY

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ECHOED THE WIDELY HELD VIEWS OF THE KHMER PEOPLE. HE

THEN SAID THAT IN HIS OPINION EVENTS HAVE MOVED SUFFICIENTLY FAR THAT THE DEPARTURE OF THE MARSHAL IS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME.

3. AFTER CHAU SAU CATEGORICALLY STATED THAT LON NOL WOULD NOT BE AROUND MUCH LONGER, HE ASKED WHETHER WE HAD ANY PARTICULAR VIEWS ON WHAT THE NEXT KHMER LEADERSHIP SHOULD DO TO BRING ABOUT A POLITICAL SOLUTION. SPECIFICALLY, HE ASKED WHAT I THOUGHT OF "THE FRENCH POSITION", WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS AN APPEAL BY THE NEXT KHMER ADMINISTRATION TO SIHANOUK RECOGNIZING HIM AS CHIEF OF STATE AND ASKING THAT MEMBERS OF THE PHNOM PENH SIDE BE INCLUDED IN THE GRUNK. I REPLIED THAT THE US WILL SUPPORT ANY NEGOTIATIONS THAT THE PARTIES THEMSELVES ARE PREPARED TO SUPPORT. I ALSO SAID THAT THE US WILL ACCEPT ANY OUTCOME FROM THE NEGOTIATIONS THAT THE PARTIES THEMSELVES WILL ACCEPT. WHETHER THE PARTICULAR PROPOSAL HE MENTIONED IS FEASIBLE OR DESIRABLE IS AGAIN A MATTER FOR THE KHMERS THEMSELVES TO DETERMINE. FINALLY, I SAID THAT THE RECENT PUBLIC STATEMENTS MADE BY SIHANOUK HAD NOT REVEALED ANY SOFTENING OF HIS STANCE AND THAT THE KHMERS ON THE OTHER SIDE STILL APPEAR TO BE DETERMINED TO WIN A MILITARY VICTORY. THEREFORE I PREFERRED AT THIS STAGE NOT TO BE INVOLVED IN SPECULATION ABOUT WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN IN THE FUTURE. I STRESSED THAT WE AMERICANS ARE DETERMINED TO HELP PROVIDE THE NECESSARY AMMUNITION, RICE AND POL FOR THE GKR, AND THE AIRLIFT IS A VISIBLE DEMONSTRATION OF THAT DETERMINATION. I ALSO EMPHASIZED THE NEED FOR FANK TO BE MORE AGGRESSIVE IN ORDER TO STABILIZE THE MILITARY SITUATION.

4. CHAU SAU SAID THAT THE POLITICAL MANEUVERING PRESENTLY GOING ON TO GET THE MARSHAL TO STEP ASIDE IS KNOWN BY ALL KHMERS AND AS A RESULT MANY HAVE ADOPTED A WAITING ATTITUDE. UNFORTUNATELY, TO SOME EXTENT THIS ATTITUDE HAS CARRIED OVER INTO FANK.

5. IN CONCLUSION, CHAU SAU SAID THAT IF THE MARSHAL LEAVES THE COUNTRY IT WOULD PERMIT A REORGANIZATION OF
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THE GOVERNMENT WITH ALL PARTIES, INCLUDING HIS OWN, BEING ABLE TO JOIN A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNION WHICH IN ITSELF WOULD STRENGTHEN THE GKR'S HAND IN ANY DIALOGUE WITH THE KHMERS ON THE OTHER SIDE. IF SUCH A GOVERNMENT WERE TO BE CREATED, HE SAID, ITS FIRST AND PRIMARY TASK SHOULD BE TO FIND A WAY TO END THE CONFLICT "EVEN IF IT MEANS ABANDONING THE REPUBLIC".

6. CHAU SAU SAID THAT AS LONG AS THE US IS NOT WEDDED TO ANY ONE PERSONALITY IN THE KHMER REPUBLIC, HE THOUGHT THERE WAS STILL A POSSIBILITY FOR THE KHMERS TO FIND AN ACCOMMODATION WITH THE OTHER SIDE. IT DOES ASSUME, HOWEVER, HE SAID, THAT AMERICAN AID WOULD NOT BE DENIED. I LISTENED TO HIM SILENTLY, WONDERING WHAT PORTION OF HIS IDEAS IS WISHFUL THINKING AND WHAT PART IS POLITICAL REALITIES SHARED BY THOSE WHO WIELD REAL POWER IN PHNOM PENH.

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